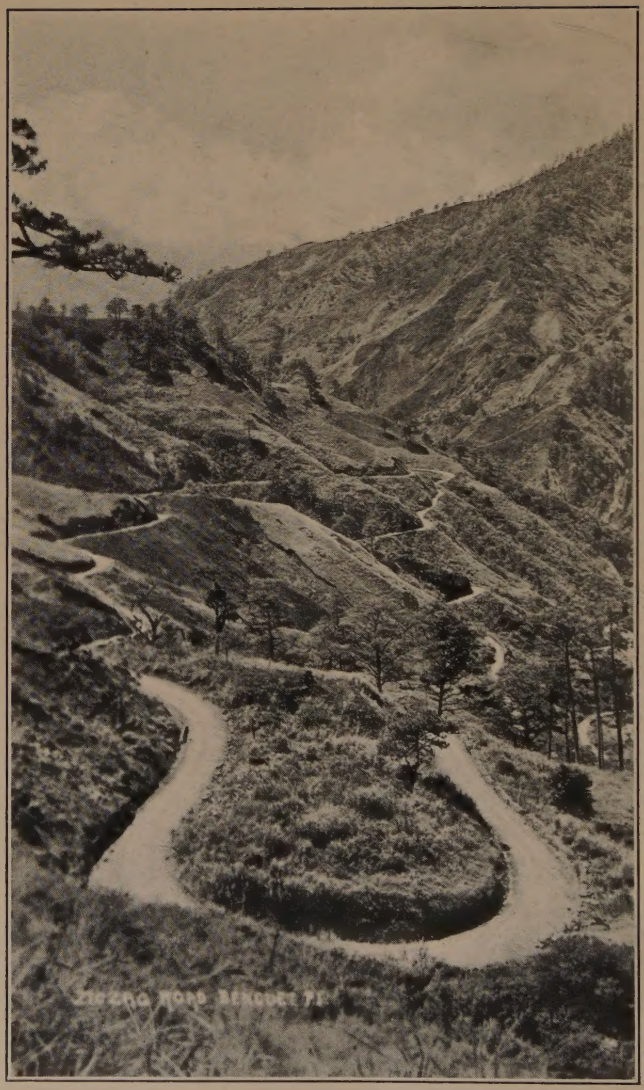
W93

LIBRARY OF
Bonebrake Theological Seminary

248
W93

Bonibrake Seminary

THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT



THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT IS AS THE PATH THAT
WINDS EVER ON AND UP

THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

By BRUCE S. WRIGHT, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE CHILDREN'S SIX MINUTES," "MOMENTS OF DEVOTION," ETC.

United Theological Seminary
BR
125
.W825
1927
LIBRARY
10 530

NASHVILLE, TENN.
COKESBURY PRESS
1927

W93

COPYRIGHT, 1927
BY
LAMAR & WHITMORE

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Purple, Scarlet, and Crimson	9
II.	The True Measure of Life	17
III.	Our Unfailing Pathfinder	23
IV.	The Triumph of Defeat	29
V.	I Am Your Friend	35
VI.	But He Prayed	41
VII.	Have Confidence in Jesus	47
VIII.	Saved by Grace	53
IX.	Strength to Do All Things	59
X.	Yes—There Can	65
XI.	The Healing Christ	71
XII.	Kept in the World	77
XIII.	The Power of a Good Habit	83
XIV.	Are Your Windows Open?	89
XV.	The Greatest Command and the Best Promise	95
XVI.	Consider the Lilies	101
XVII.	Even Our Faith	107
XVIII.	Are You Afraid?	113

10.530

I

PURPLE, SCARLET, AND CRIMSON

PURPLE, SCARLET, AND CRIMSON

Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three.
1 Corinthians 13: 13

CAN anything new be said on this ancient and lovely, though familiar, verse? I may be foolish to attempt it; therefore I will tell you right at the outset the idea I have. It is the idea of colors. There are three primary colors: blue, yellow, and red. All the colors in the sun or under the sun; all the colors in the rainbow or outside the rainbow; every color or shade or tint you can possibly imagine is a combination, in proper proportions, of the three primary colors —blue, yellow, and red. There are three primary qualities of the soul: faith, hope, and love. Every achievement of character, every noble quality of life, every moral or spiritual power is but the combination of the three fundamental qualities of the soul—faith, hope, and love. Right here I desire to refer to only three of the many colors I might tell about.

First, there is the Purple of the New Year, touched by the blue of faith. Royal purple we call it. Is there anything more royal than the procession of the years? Purple in which the blue of faith predominates. This faith springs out of past experience. It is such a faith as

Samuel had when, impressed by a special deliverance in the time of difficulty, he took a great stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, naming the stone Ebenezer. Recall the stately language he used as he dedicated the stone, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us." That is to say, All through the past the Lord has been our help; that past help is our guaranty for all the future. Faith that grows with each passing year. When Longfellow was well along in years, he was asked how it was that he was able to keep so vigorous and write so beautifully. His reply was to point to a blossoming apple tree outside the window and say: "That apple tree is very old, but I never saw prettier blossoms than these which it bears now. The tree grows a little new wood each year, and I suppose it is out of that new wood that these new blossoms come. Like the apple tree, I try to grow a little new wood each year." That is good gospel. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Take on a little new wood each year. "Which is your masterpiece?" an American artist was asked by a visitor. "There it is," replied the painter, pointing to a blank canvas on the wall. "I have painted it many times, yet I have never touched brush to that particular canvas. It is my dream canvas. I plan and dream every picture on that canvas, and some day I shall paint there my masterpiece." I have not yet preached my best sermon—it is

still to be preached. You have not yet done your best piece of work—that is ahead of you, in the Purple of the New Year, in the blue of faith.

The second color I have in mind is the Scarlet of Easter, tinted with the yellow of hope. Standing before Pilate, when Pilate was done with Jesus, he was taken by a violent mob, led into a common hall and there stripped of his raiment. In mockery they put upon him a scarlet robe. In mockery! Their mockings were turned into testimonies of truth, for scarlet is symbolic of the Easter triumph and the Easter hope. "Here lies," we read on many a tombstone. Through the power of Easter we are able to pass through our cities of the dead and change the inscription to "He is not here." Ian Maclaren wrote many lovely things, but nothing lovelier than his story of the aged woman whose life ambition was to visit the city of Edinburgh. But for years she could not be persuaded to take the railway journey because of her dread of the tunnel through which she would have to pass. Finally, however, circumstances were such that she was compelled to go. For a while her fears were great. Then, from sheer worry and exhaustion she fell asleep, and when she awoke she was overjoyed to learn that the tunnel had been passed and she was near her journey's end. I wonder if death is something like that, a tunnel which we dread, but which is mercifully passed in the calm and

trustful strength of the Easter hope! Blessed be the scarlet of Easter!

Third, there is the Crimson of Christmas, dominated by the red of love. Which is the greatest Christmas verse in the Bible? Would you say that it is in Isaiah where the prophet lifts up his voice and cries, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, . . . the Prince of Peace"? Or is the greatest Christmas verse Matthew's stately beginning of the Christmas story, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Or would you say that Luke's verse of domestic felicity is the greatest Christmas verse, "Mary brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger"? Wonderful verses are these, full of color. But there is one verse that surpasses them all, a verse of crimson hue, shot through with the red of love, "For God so loved the world that he gave." Love and a gift! Crimson, crimson, everywhere!

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three." If it is true, as it is indisputably true, that any conceivable shade or color can be made from the proper combinations of blue, yellow, and red—and these colors under the alchemy of the divine artist make our spring, summer, autumn, and

winter seasons of ravishing beauty—it is likewise true that you can solve any problem, you can achieve any imaginable result of character with the three primary qualities of the soul: faith, hope, and love. And there are three colors never on land or sea, ours to enjoy, ours to wear, ours to make:

The Purple of the New Year, touched with the blue of faith;
The Scarlet of Easter, tinted with the yellow of hope;
The Crimson of Christmas, glorified by the red of God's love

II

THE TRUE MEASURE OF LIFE

THE TRUE MEASURE OF LIFE

> **A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.**
>
> *Luke 12: 15*

WE are not to infer from this statement that the opposite is true, that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of his poverty. If there is no praise in mere possessions, neither is there credit in destitution. Jesus means that life is not to be weighed upon the inaccurate scales of things. For example, take the property values of my own city of Buffalo. The tax valuation of Buffalo property is close to one billion dollars. But that figure says nothing at all about churches, schools, homes, libraries, industries, and the daily good and honest work done throughout the city. We might well say, Buffalo's life consisteth not in the abundance of its tax roll. We must dig down beneath this billion-dollar tax assessment if we would find the real life of Buffalo. A man's reputation, or his power, may consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, but not his life. In what, then, does his life consist?

A man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he knoweth. Knowledge, schools, education are all the offspring of the Christian faith. Wherever the faith goes, these

follow. I do not mean encyclopedic knowledge; rather knowledge that is useful, knowledge that deepens, widens, and heightens life. Knowledge that is general and knowledge that is specific. I am impressed more and more with the specific knowledge possessed by the great men of the Bible. There was Job. Job grows on me. I like him to-day better than twenty-five years ago in my early friendship with him. Hear him as he silences his hecklers with the language of certainty, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." General knowledge for information; specific knowledge for inspiration—such knowledge fits a man for life.

A man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he believeth. We repeat glibly the aphorism, "Seeing is believing." Actually the statement should be reversed, "Believing is seeing." Robert Fulton believed in the steam-propelled boat before he ever saw it making its slow and cumbersome but certain way over the waters of the Hudson. Wilbur Wright believed in the heavier-than-air machine before he saw it soaring as a bird in the sky. Some of the mystifying, yet most practical, objects of our daily use are things of belief rather than sight. Take the telephone. You do not see the message as it comes over the wire, nor the face behind the voice at the other end—all that, the vital part of the phone, is purely a matter of believing before seeing. Our spiritual life is abundant according

to the measure of our belief. "It makes no difference what a man believes," some one argues. It makes all the difference in the world. "To them gave he power to become the sons of God." To whom? To them that believe on the name of Jesus.

A man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he doeth. "He went about doing good," is Luke's brief but adequate biography of Jesus. Said Henry Drummond, "You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out are the moments when you have done things for others." There is not a person whose eyes follow these words who is not able to do something, much, for himself and the world. "Take up thy bed and walk," said Jesus to the palsied man. If he, carried into the house by four men, could do what he did—walk out in his own strength—there isn't anything under the sun which you ought to do that you cannot do, with the strength of the Master.

The final greatness is that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he loveth. I hold that this is climactic: Knowing, believing, doing, loving. In that truly epochal little book, "The Christ of the Indian Road," Stanley Jones tells of his conference with Mahatma Gandhi and the great Indian leader's suggestion for making Christianity natural to India. It is, "I would suggest that you put your emphasis upon love, for love is the center and soul of

Christianity." Love, not as a sentiment, but as a mighty working force.

"A man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he—" It is for you to say what it shall be.

III

OUR UNFAILING PATHFINDER

OUR UNFAILING PATHFINDER

He goeth before you.
Matthew 28: 7

JESUS is our unfailing Pathfinder.

We are indebted to the pathfinders of history. To Abraham, who went out, not knowing whither he went; who had an object in view, a direction to travel, but whose path was uncertain. To Moses, who blazed the trail for human freedom, who laid the foundations for substantial government, who wrote on the consciences of men the irrevocable laws of personal morality and national righteousness. To Joseph, who proved to his own and succeeding generations that a young man, in the midst of strange surroundings, confronted by tremendous temptations, can keep his purpose true and himself unspotted from the world. To Columbus, and Drake, and Balboa, and Frobisher, and Magellan, pathfinders of the sea. To Lot, and Boone, and Fremont, and Mason, and Clark, pathfinders of the land. To Puritan, and Pilgrim, and Cavalier, pathfinders of the growing mind and expanding life of humanity. To Cromwell, and Washington, and Lincoln, pathfinders of the larger liberty. To Savonarola, and Luther, and Knox, and Wesley, pathfinders of the enlarging soul. To Paul, and Xavier, and Carey, and Paton, and Livingstone,

pathfinders of the Saviour's final missionary command. To Gutenberg, and Stevenson, and Fulton, and Morse, and Howe, and Edison, pathfinders of the mechanical world, blazing the way to convenience and comfort.

To these, and all their kind, the pathfinders of history, we owe an unpayable debt of gratitude. They have gone before. But the greatest path of all is the path of life, and the noblest pathfinder is the one who goes before, along the path of life. Jesus is that pathfinder. He goeth before you into your daily work. Following him we learn that work is not an end in itself, but a means to an end; that while we are working for a living we are also working out a life.

He goeth before you along the path of your baffling problems. What is life's greatest problem? It is the problem of sin. Jesus is the only one who can solve that problem. The statesman cannot do it. The manufacturer cannot do it. The entrancing poet cannot do it. The luring musician cannot do it. Jesus is the only one who has gone before us, through whose merits we are enabled to say, "He was tempted in all points like as we are."

He goeth before you along the path of sorrow and suffering—suffering of mind and of body; sorrow of tears and sorrow too deep for tears. A little child on a bed of sickness, tossing in his delirium and fever, unable to tell where the pain is most poignant, for he is too small to know and

too unconscious to speak—Jesus is there, for he loves little children. A youth distracted, for some mountain of difficulty has risen in his pathway—Jesus is there between the youth and the mountain, for he too was often distracted. A man of affairs at his wits' end, not knowing which way to turn—Jesus is with him, for he was frequently hard pressed. An aged man, friendless and neglected—Jesus is there, for to such he came to minister.

Jesus goeth before you through the gates of death and along the larger pathway of life. This is all I know about death, this is all I care to know, that Jesus goes before.

Jesus is the fully authenticated pathfinder for every life, for all of life. There is not a wilderness so dense that he cannot penetrate it. There is not a mountain so high that he cannot scale it. There is not a tribe so barbaric that he cannot find some good in it. There is not a nation so civilized that he cannot lift it higher. There is not a sickness so dire that he cannot minister to it. There is not a sin so foul that he cannot forgive it. There is not a sorrow so deep that he cannot wipe the tears away. There is not a suffering of body so intense, of mind so poignant, of disappointment so keen, that he cannot help bear it. There is not a life so low that he cannot redeem it, so high that he cannot use it—if, if you will follow, when he goes before, where he leads.

O Thou who art the sure pathfinder of life, help us to follow where thou dost lead. Thou hast been through it all. All the sins that assail us thou hast met and conquered. All the sorrows that would crush us thou hast put beneath thy feet. All the problems that baffle us, and worry and weaken us, thou hast faced and solved. All the discouragements that snap at us and delay us in our path of progress thou hast known and triumphed over. Thou art ever before us; help us to keep close behind, never to lose sight of thy form, never to obliterate thy footprints.

"There let the way appear
Steps unto heaven;
All that thou sendest me,
In mercy given."

IV
THE TRIUMPH OF DEFEAT

THE TRIUMPH OF DEFEAT

The lame take the prey.
Isaiah 33: 23

IN other words, the defeated are victorious. Here is a vivid picture of the triumph of the vanquished. Assyria and Israel are opposed to each other—the hosts of Assyria against the remnant of Israel; the power of Assyria against the weakness of Israel; the wealth of Assyria against the poverty of Israel. But deliverance is at hand. Mighty Assyria, like a rudderless ship, is at the mercy of the waves. Isaiah, seeing Assyria in the grip of the storm, encourages Israel with the words, "The tacklings are loose; the mast is broken at the base; they cannot spread the sail; the prey of the great spoil is divided; the lame take the prey." There recurs to my mind the chorus of an old gospel hymn:

> "Not to the strong is the battle,
> Not to the swift is the race;
> But to the true and the faithful,
> Victory is promised through grace."

Strength means nothing to God. He is the monarch of strength. Mere physical or material strength must have an added quality if it is to win the approval of the Almighty. God is not on the side of the heaviest artillery—the lame take the prey. In the long run, might does not make right—the lame take the prey. Wealth,

of itself, has no standing with God. For the earth is the Lord's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his. Riches are utterly powerless when we match them with the essential forces of the universe. Wealth never yet built a nation, established a home, founded an institution, wrote a book, gave a young man an education, never achieved success, never gave satisfaction to the heart of man, nor peace to his soul. The philosophy of the power of possessions was eternally disproved in the life of Job—the lame take the prey. Beauty is not the watchword of God. He is the creator of beauty. Out of chaos he brings order; out of blackness he brings whiteness; out of foulness he brings fragrance; out of awkwardness he brings grace. "Flower of purity of color, of fragrance of breath, of grace of form, whence came your perfect beauty?" "Out of this soil." "What, out of that foul, black muck!" "Yes," answers the flower; "but I did not do it: He did it." The lame take the prey.

> "Beautiful faces are those that wear—
> It matters little if dark or fair—
> Whole-souled honesty printed there.
>
> Beautiful eyes are those that show
> Like crystal panes where hearth-fires glow,
> Beautiful thoughts that burn below."

A handicap acts as a spur; that is, it does to the indomitable spirit. A thorn in the flesh reminds one of his frailty, urges him to do his best, to conquer in spite of his drawback. Fanny

Crosby was totally blind. Her inability to see with physical eyes caused her to turn her gaze inward, to see with the eyes of her soul. Out of that affliction came a wonderful experience that enabled her to write more than 7,000 gospel hymns—the lame take the prey. The pampered have never been great producers. Slippered ease hinders one in the long, hard march to achievement. To be born with a "silver spoon in one's mouth" is a blessing of doubtful value. Look upon this picture. Yonder is a triumphant hillside. In the midst of the hillside is a throne. Gathered about the throne is a vast multitude of people, of every nation and every kindred and every tongue. They are all happy, for they are singing for very joy. Some one, looking at the throng, inquires, "Who are these who are so gloriously arrayed in white?" The one questioned answers, "These are they who have come up through great tribulation." Yes, he is right. One comes up only through tribulation—the lame take the prey. The sinner becomes the saint. Augustine is transformed. Paul right-about faces. The converted harlot enters the kingdom ahead of the self-righteous Pharisee. Our greatest weakness becomes, under God, our noblest strength. Be ye therefore encouraged. You who have much to contend with, you who have known poverty and loss and pain and sorrow and sickness, take courage; in the Saviour's name, be heartened, for the lame take the prey.

V

I AM YOUR FRIEND

I AM YOUR FRIEND

I have called you friends.
John 15: 15

SOME one has said that the greatest gift one can bestow upon another is not the gift of goods, nor of property, nor of money, but of friendship. This supreme gift Jesus bestowed upon his disciples, frankly, freely, fully. The statement is reciprocal: we are his friends; he then is our friend—Jesus our perfect friend. It is a great thought, isn't it?

Jesus is the perfect friend in his penetrating insight. He sees deeply, deepest into our souls. Our communion service recognizes this, for at the very outset we join in the collect, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." The microscope is a great little instrument, but it is comparatively modern. It was as late as 1590 that a Hollander, Zacharias Janssen by name, invented and made the microscope in its present form. From the time of the first heart-beat, from the time the human conscience could distinguish between right and wrong, the divine microscope has been in use—the penetrating insight of the Infinite. Our perfect friend sees our secret sins; this, and this only is the true confessional. He sees not only our secret sins,

but our secret sorrows, our secret burdens, our secret longings. There is one who knows.

> "I know my Heavenly Father knows
> The storms that would my way oppose.
> I know my Heavenly Father knows
> The balm I need to soothe my woes."

Jesus is our perfect friend because, though he sees and knows the worst in us, he forgives us. Not only does he forgive, he does not forsake. Human friendship seldom rises to that plane. It is human nature, not divine, that says, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." It is human nature, not divine, when we learn of gross evil in another, to stand off rather than stand by. This precious Book has preserved for us a beautiful sentiment. It comes down to us from the Old Testament period. Here it is, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Sometimes brothers do not stick very close, but a brother is supposed to; and if a brother does not, who will? But though a brother stick as loyally and royally close as a brother should, there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. That is prophetical; it is likewise experimental.

Jesus, the perfect friend, sees not only the worst, he sees also the best, encourages it, and calls it forth. You know how it is; there are people who call out the best in us; there are others who call out the worst. I suppose the most

notable pastorate that the city of Baltimore ever had was Maltbie Babcock's fourteen-year pastorate in Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church. In that great city Johns Hopkins University did an unusual thing for Maltbie Babcock. The university set aside a room in one of its buildings for Babcock's use. He had stated hours there, and to that room came young men by the scores and hundreds. It was a sort of holy confessional, and out from that room they came with a vision of the new life. There was something about Maltbie Babcock that called out the best in a young man. This is only faintly suggestive of the power of the perfect friendship of Christ. He sees the best and calls it forth. As Hutchinson says in his great book, fiction but essentially true, "Jesus, the Greatest Common Denominator, is the one increasing purpose."

Another service this perfect friend performs for us. He links heaven and earth, God with man, the individual soul with the Infinite Creator. Other friends link us with other things. I recall a friend who linked me with an inspiring view. He made the arrangements and led the way for a mountain climb. I would not have gone had it not been for him. Standing at sunrise on the top of the mountain, the world seemed bigger, I smaller, and nature nobler than ever before or since. I have my friend to thank for that. Other friends have linked me with pleasures and privi-

leges. But only Christ can link earth with heaven. As Cecil Alexander sings, "He only can unlock the gate of heaven and let us in." He only can link us with God. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." For anyone else to say that would be absolute blasphemy; from the lips of Jesus the words are perfectly natural and absolutely true.

George A. Gordon, of Old South Church, Boston, has made us forever indebted to him by the gift of his book, "My Education and Religion." To me the loveliest portion of the entire book is the closing sentence of his chapter on "Education through Friendship." Here it is, "If this were a confession, I should name as my first, last, and greatest friend, Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity is friendship through Jesus, and lifted into the life of God."

VI

BUT HE PRAYED

BUT HE PRAYED

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are; but he prayed.
James 5: 17

I HAVE been reading William E. Barton's "Life of Lincoln." I like it because of its frankness, its determined effort to tell the truth. We cannot do too much in honest memory of this great man; our encomiums can scarcely be too extravagant, but we are in danger of forgetting—and Lincoln himself is the last one who would have us forget—that he was a man subject to like passions as we are.

This is one reason why I trust the Scriptures; they do not let us forget what sort of men laid the foundations of the human family. Scripture does not let us forget that Moses, great as he was, lost control of himself and in a fit of anger committed a crime against which he in his sane moments pronounced an unequivocal command. Scripture does not allow us to forget that Abraham, who climbed so high toward God that he was honored with the name, Friend of God, deliberately practiced deceit. Scripture does not let us forget that Jonah was a coward; that Job was a petty arguer; that David had dreadful moral relapses; that Paul manifested at times a narrow spirit; that even the disciples who had

lived so close to the Master wavered, turned, and fled. These men all attained the heights, they won out at last, they now occupy niches in God's Hall of Fame; but in the gallery of the Scriptures their perfect portrait is seen, and there we are reminded that they were men subject to like infirmities as we are.

From among their number we take Elijah, a name to conjure with, a man of mighty deeds, with the sweeping mantle of power, whose funeral train was a chariot of fire; yet Elijah was subject to like passions as we are. The centuries are obliterated by the magic of this verse. He stands right here in our midst. The temptations we have he had; the problems we have he faced; he had the same nature, like infirmities. What infirmities was he subject to?

First, he was subject to discouragement. Is anyone immune from discouragement? Does not even the most courageous man, the man of indomitable will and iron purpose, have moments when he fears all is lost, that he had better give up the battle? Elijah was like that. In the silence of the wilderness, beneath the shade of a friendly tree, he prayed, "Lord, I am utterly discouraged; let me die, I pray; I am not fit to live."

Again, Elijah was subject to credulity. He desired a sign, some clearly evident sign, of the power and presence of God. We are equally credulous. Who among us has not said, in his

heart if not out loud: "Why doesn't God send a wind, a strong wind that will sweep the world clean of its moral filth, its sinful defiance, its disease-breeding infidelity? Why doesn't he send an earthquake to lay in ruins our modern Sodoms and Gomorrahs? Why doesn't he kindle a fire that shall burn up the accumulated dross of our human relationships, our hate and bitterness?"

Then, Elijah was subject to egotism. See him there in the cave, alone in his self-righteousness. Hear him, "Lord, the people have forsaken thy covenant, they have broken down thine altars, all thy prophets have been slain by the sword, and I am the only one left." The Lord replies, "Come with me; see yonder, there are seven thousand good men left, seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Can we blame Elijah? He was subject to like infirmities as we are.

Elijah was also subject to departure. Some would say death. Departure or death—Elijah had to leave this world, these dear, familiar scenes, these fond, friendly faces. But this is not the end; Elijah prayed. Prayer gave him courage in the day of his discouragement. Prayer produced the faith that triumphed over credulty. Prayer enabled him to conquer his egotism; after he prayed, loyalty to Jehovah was above everything else. By prayer he conquered death; he gave death a new name, forerunner

of the resurrection; death became departure. Across the centuries Elijah the Tishbite and Riley the Hoosier join hands, and Elijah gives the approving "Amen" to Riley's song:

"I cannot say, and I will not say
That he is dead. He is just away!

With a cheery smile and a wave of the hand,
He has wandered into an unknown land,

And left us dreaming how very fair
It needs must be since he lingers there.

And you—O you, who the wildest yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return—

Think of him faring on, as dear
In the love of There as the love of Here.

Think of him still as the same, I say;
He is not dead—he is just away."

God of our fathers, we thank thee for prayer. Thy promises are true. History testifies. Prayer is triumphant. We are tempted, we are tried, we sorrow, we struggle on through discouragement, failure, and loss. But we can pray. Teach us to pray. Help us to pray.

VII

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN JESUS

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN JESUS

Let not your heart be roubled.

John 14: 1

NIGHT had fallen with Oriental swiftness upon Jerusalem. Jesus was alone with his disciples in an upper room in the house of a friend. Even an empty room may be put to good use if one has Christ in his life. Isn't every room empty until Christ comes within to dwell there? In any event Jesus transforms every room into which he is invited. The Gideons do a noble service in their determination to place a Bible in every hotel room throughout America. O to be able to put Christ into every hotel room in the United States! And not only into every hotel room, but into every other room. Into the League of Nations room in Geneva. Into the Congressional rooms in Washington. Into the American Federation of Labor rooms whenever they meet. Into the Bankers' Association rooms wherever they are found. Into school and college halls, from primary grade to post-graduate work. Into factories and mills, offices and stores, homes and churches. Churches? Yes, sometimes we make it difficult for Christ to come into the rooms of our churches. There are twenty-two rooms in this church. We want

Christ in every room—the rooms in which we play and the rooms in which we have friendly visits, and the rooms in which we catch holy visions; the rooms in which we are served food for the strength of the body and the room in which we partake of the bread and water of life. So that upper room of long ago becomes the type of every room to-day, a room transformed by the presence of Christ.

Hear him as he says, "Let not your heart be troubled." Are you troubled? I do not ask what your trouble is. That I have no right to ask, or know. But the Saviour knows. It may be sin: there is forgiveness. It may be sorrow: there is comfort. It may be temptation: there is triumph. It may be discouragement: there is hope. It may be sickness: there is health. It may be friends who have proved false: there is a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It may be death: there is life. Hear the Saviour as he speaks to you through this communion, "Let not your heart be troubled."

I have read of a business man who led a busy and successful commercial life in the city of London. He was also a loyal churchman and devoted follower of Christ. He needed a cable address for his growing business enterprises. What do you think was the word he chose? It was the word "undisturbed." It was printed on his business letterheads and used in his business, "Undisturbed, London." Let this be our

motto and experience! Listen, not to the language of the communion service, beautiful and stately as it is, nor to the voice of the minister or the music of the organ, but listen to the words of Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled."

VIII
SAVED BY GRACE

SAVED BY GRACE

By grace are ye saved.
Ephesians 2: 8

WE like definiteness, in religion as well as in business. A clear, clean-cut statement has an appeal and a charm all its own. Beating around the bush is so futile, so befogging; yet there is so much of it. You have heard a man talk; he talked with apparent intelligence for an hour, but when he was done you could not for the life of you tell what he had been talking about. You have read a book, a reputed excellent book, a best-seller; you read with concentration and earnest endeavor to get the message of the book, but when you had finished the last word of the last paragraph you honestly asked yourself the question, "What was the theme of that book anyhow?" There is one thing about the Bible —it is a book of definiteness. Indefiniteness can never be charged against the Bible. There is no befogging the issue in the Word of God. In our devotional verse to-day we have a glorious example of the attribute of definiteness. By grace ye are saved. There is nothing uncertain about that. This is no cloudy statement; it is as clear as the noonday.

The grace of God—the graciousness, the gift of God—saves, that and nothing else. Race

cannot save, nor science, nor education, nor achievement, nor good works—all helpful companions of grace, working hand in hand with the gift of God, but it is the grace of God alone, appropriated by faith, that lifts us up, that saves us. I once heard the testimony of the little blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby. She was then over ninety years of age, but she thrilled the great audience that packed Carnegie Music Hall, New York, as she said:

> "I shall see Him face to face,
> And tell the story, Saved by grace."

Saved! Salvation is an old word, but by no means an obsolete word. It means deliverance. By grace are ye delivered. Do you desire deliverance? Certainly. From what do you desire deliverance? From debt? Done. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every man to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

> "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
> Sin had left a guilty stain,
> He washed it white as snow."

From what else would you like to be delivered? From want? Good. "I have been young, and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Another says, "I should like to be delivered from worry; worry is my bugbear." All right. "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Do you desire deliverance from fear? Fear of the future and fear of death? Here it is. "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." "But I am troubled about my sins; I honestly seek deliverance from the stain of my wrong-doing, from the ghostly memory of my mistakes." He will do it. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that love him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." O, this is a great statement to carry in the mind and treasure in the heart! Definite, sufficient, beautiful—by grace are ye saved.

Our Master, our Lord, and our Saviour, through whose power we are delivered from all bondage, we thank thee for these words; we claim them as our own. We will not wait until we see thee face to face, but we'll begin now to tell the story, saved by grace.

IX

STRENGTH TO DO ALL THINGS

STRENGTH TO DO ALL THINGS

I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.

I CAN do many things through my own strength. Any self-respecting man is rather proud—justifiably proud, of course—of what he is able to do through his own strength. I obtained an education through my own strength. I expended so much strength in obtaining money for the cost of an education that there was little strength left for the education itself. During the major part of my college course my weekly program was on this wise: I left college Saturday afternoon at the close of the class period; rode ninety miles on the train; changed cars and rode another eighteen; waited two hours; took a train at midnight, riding twenty-four more; got off the train about one o'clock Sunday morning; walked three miles over a practically uninhabited road, carrying my suitcase; tumbled into bed at two-thirty Sunday morning; up at seven; attended Sunday school, preached; young people's service at six-thirty, preaching to the same people again at seven-thirty. Monday I spent in getting back to college. I haven't much of an education; that is, I am not technically nor professionally trained, but such an education as I have was obtained through my own strength. I

speak of this not to parade my own accomplishments, but simply to remind those who read these lines of their own biography—you have achieved many things through your own strength.

I can do more things through the strength of others. If I can do many things through my own strength, certainly I can do more things through the strength of others. That is, life is a partnership. Take the matter of politics. How often is it true that a man is elected to office through the strength of his friends rather than through his own strength. It is not always ability, nor the strength of ability, that wins the coveted place. Rather is it the strength of the organization, the strength of one's friends. Or there is business, any business; but for illustration we will take the department store. A big department store always fascinates me. There is such an array of purchasables, and so attractively arranged, that it requires the strongest will to prevent one from buying beyond his ability to pay. Here is this huge enterprise. Back somewhere in the shadows is that invisible power called capital; and back in the midst of the capital is the manager and board of directors. We do not see the capital, nor do we see the manager—they are hidden away somewhere in the internals of the store. But out here in front we do see the army of clerks, department heads, cleaners, and out beyond the army of employees is the great multitude we designate as the public. This huge

department store is made possible by them. Capital and board sitting back in the shadows may well say, "We are what we are, our business and all, through the strength of our friends." So too the pastor may truly say, "I can do many things through the strength of my friends." For it is true that the most influential preacher in Pittsburgh, Memphis, or St. Louis, is the man whose people follow him, support him, quote him, subscribe to his policies and are loyal to his leadership.

I can do all things through Christ. Many things, through my own strength. More things through the strength of my friends. All things through the strength of Christ. Life would be hopeless without this final statement, because there are so many things we cannot do ourselves, and there is a host of things our friends cannot do for us, things possible only through the strength of Christ. I will mention but three: Forgiveness. There is a statement over in Romans that strikes a responsive chord in our hearts. It is this, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This sin that stains my life, who can cleanse it? Who can forgive it? Who can help at this point where all human help is unavailing? Who but God? Forgiveness is with God. Forgiveness is the sweet, satisfying secret reposing in the heart of Jesus, available to every seeking soul. Second, encouragement. I do not mean now the kind that slaps a man on

the back and says, "Buck up, old fellow, things will come out all right." Rather do I mean the divine encouragement that penetrates deep into a man's soul, that lifts him up and causes him to face a new work because he is a new man in Christ. Again, assurance. In that great hour that, some day, will come to all of us, that we cannot avoid; when death enters your door, what are you going to do? What can you do? What can you say? You can say—and saying is doing—"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." The literal reading is, I am strong to endure all things with him who strengthens me. With—this is the magic word. It is the secret of the vine and the branch; the strength and life and sap and growing power of the vine are imparted to the branch, because the branch abides with the vine. So with Christ. If you stay with him, he will stay with you; because he never fails, you cannot fail; as he is strong, so you are strong with him.

X

YES—THERE CAN

YES—THERE CAN

> Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?
>
> *John 1: 46*

A STRAIGHT question deserves a straight answer. Turn immediately to the answer of this question. In the language of Philip, "Come and see."

In Nazareth we see a loving mother. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is in the Nazareth home. See her, moving quietly about the house and the courtyard, busy with her daily tasks. There she goes to the village well for the day's supply of water, carrying with graceful ease the tall water-pot. Now look upon her, seated on the low Oriental bench, with a boy beside her, looking eagerly into her face as she tells him about her people, her hopes, her plans, their sacred festivals, and the illustrious city of Jerusalem. The boy leaps to his feet and, with the soft word of permission from his mother, runs from the house to join his companions at play in the street, Mary's longing eyes following the lad's lithe little body, a loving mother. I do not know much about eugenics—it is still in the discussional stage—but I do know something about religion; religion makes a good mother; religion made Mary in Nazareth a good mother.

Again, in Nazareth we see a loyal father. The word "loyalty" more than any other word characterizes the life of Joseph. Loyalty is the scarlet thread that runs through all the Gospel account of his doings. It was Joseph who stood by Mary and shielded her in those accusing, trying days before the birth of Jesus. It was Joseph who took Mary with him to Bethlehem when he went to be registered. It was Joseph who found a place—only a manger, 'tis true, but a place—in which the Holy Child was to be born. It was Joseph who made the long and tiresome journey into Egypt to save the infant and his mother from the wrath of the murderous Herod. It was Joseph who returned, at the word of the Lord, to his home country, established a shelter in Nazareth, opened a shop and began to make yokes, to make a living, to make a life. All responsibility for the bringing up of children cannot be thrust upon the mother; the father has his share. In Nazareth we find the example so needed in our day, the example of a loyal father.

Likewise in Nazareth we see a dutiful son. Luke gives us this beautiful picture of Jesus. He went down to Nazareth and was subject unto them. I have noticed that wherever I have seen a dutiful son, a son who regarded the needs and comforts of his parents, I have seen a youth or man with many another good quality. And wherever I have seen a son neglectful of his parents, disobedient to the ancient command,

there I have seen a son with many another bad quality. Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Yes, a dutiful son.

A loving mother, plus a loyal father, plus a dutiful son makes a happy home.

"O happy home, where little ones are given
Early to Thee, in humble faith and prayer,
To thee, their God, who from the heights of heaven
Guides them and guards them with more than mother's care!"

Something else came out of Nazareth: that is a clear vision. There is a large book, well and winsomely written, called "The Unknown Years of Jesus." How many unknown years did Jesus have? Thirty. Where were they spent? In Nazareth. What was he doing all that time? Working, of course; but he was also doing something else—he was gathering the vision of his life work. When he stood up in the synagogue, opened the roll, and read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn," somehow there came to him the vision that he was that one, he was set to do that thing. The vision came to Jesus, not in golden Jerusalem, but in despised Nazareth. Have you caught the

vision? It matters not where it comes; just so it comes.

One final good thing came out of Nazareth—a sufficient Saviour. Frank Crane says, "I call Christ my Saviour because he is the most considerable force that lifts me out of the dominance of lower motives into the realm of higher motives." I like those words, "He lifts me." They are an echo of the statement of the Psalmist, "He hath lifted me out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock." He lifts up—that is what the Saviour does. Nathanael, I am glad you asked this straightforward question. Philip, I am glad you answered as you did. Nathanael, I rejoice that you accepted the suggestion made by Philip and came to see. Nathanael, I am glad that when you came and saw and were convinced you had the courage to confess, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." O Nathanael, since that notable day countless thousands have lifted their voices and shouted in triumph, "Nathanael, you are right; he is indeed the Son of God, he is the sufficient Saviour, he lifts us."

Even so, Saviour, lift us—out of fear into faith; out of doubt into trust; out of sickness into health; out of cowardice into courage; out of sin into righteousness; out of the dominance of low motives into the realm of higher motives.

XI

THE HEALING CHRIST

THE HEALING CHRIST

He healed them.
Matthew 4: 24

EVEN the casual student of the life of Jesus cannot but note the attention the Gospel records give to Jesus's healing ministry.

He healed their bodies. Let us make that perfectly plain! They brought to him all sick people, Matthew tells us, people taken with divers diseases and torments, the palsied, the demoniac, and he healed their bodies. There is a direct connection between health of the body and enjoyment of life. Jesus struck the shackles of disease from men's bodies and led them out through the wide-open door to the full enjoyment of life.

Now the question at once arises in our minds, What Jesus did then, will he not do now? I answer an unequivocal, Yes. What he did then he is doing now. I visit the hospitals frequently. Going through the wards, passing from bed to bed, I can say with the truth of truth, Jesus heals. For it is the gospel of Christ which has created the sympathetic heart, the trained mind, the skillful touch, the gentle hand in dealing with sickness, disease, and pain.

Has the Church neglected the ministry of healing? The easy, popular answer to that question is that it has. In my judgment it has not.

My answer to this question is found in the moving-picture film of our Foreign Missionary Society, "When the Missionary Doctor Meets the Witch Doctor." What the Church has neglected is the most important single element in the ministry of healing—namely, faith. Where there is faith, plus the application of medical skill, scientific attention, loving care, there is healing. There may not be restoration, but there may be healing. I may not be restored to the strength, the buoyancy, the bodily resiliency of twenty or twenty-five years of age—I cannot expect that —but within the circle of God's will I may expect healing.

However, the healing of primary importance is not the healing of the body, vital as that is. The Hon. Chauncey M. Depew may live to be one hundred years of age. I hope he may. Each succeeding birthday may he radiate optimism, happiness, and good advice. We will listen to it. But the time is surely coming when even the century-mark claimants must bid good-by to their frail bodies. Therefore, the healing of first importance is the healing of our mental, moral, and spiritual diseases. In this field, even as in the other, Jesus is the Great Physician, the Incomparable Healer. And to Christ the Physician you may come without money and without price.

Jesus comes to the individual life; he takes the demoniac mind, the mind possessed with demons,

the demons of filth and uncleanness, of selfishness and sin, of worry and anxiety, and he heals that mind. He makes it a clean mind and imparts to it the untroubled attribute, calms it, and makes it constructive. He cleanses the leprous life. Is there hope for the moral leper? Yes, in Christ; he heals him. Your palsied will, your withered hand—the hand weak and helpless when lifted to do a good work—Christ will heal.

The glory of the gospel is its healing quality. With Christ there are no hopeless cases; all cases are recoverable. And, while Schopenhauer declares you can no more change the character of a bad man than the character of a tiger; while Nietzsche, sneering at the weak, proclaims the doctrine of force, the gospel, refusing to be lured into an argument, goes right on reaching down and lifting men up, doing what they say cannot be done. At the same time we, with countless others, the product of the gospel, declare with an unutterable confidence: Jesus heals.

"The healing of the seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

XII
KEPT IN THE WORLD

KEPT IN THE WORLD

> I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.
>
> *John 17: 15*

WHAT does Jesus ask for his disciples? Does he ask wealth? Does he ask power? Or is it fame? None of these things move him. Holding them up before his Heavenly Father, Jesus asks one thing only—that the life of God may be manifest in their lives in the world. In the world—here is the secret. In the world, but not of the world. Jesus here enunciates some great principles of life and action.

The first principle he enunciates is the principle of Discrimination. He establishes the right balance between this world and the next, between earth and heaven. We suffer from two groups, from impractical zealots who disparage this world and from infidel minds who underrate the next. The one is as bad as the other. The first is content to sit and sing away his soul in everlasting bliss; the second doesn't sing at all. The first says, "Heaven is everything, this world nothing." The second boasts, "This world is everything, heaven is nothing; this world is all that we are sure of; make the most

of it." Behold Jesus standing forth to declare the actuality of earth and the reality of heaven: laying upon his disciples their sure trust to be kept in this world and assuring them of their certain triumph in the prepared world awaiting them. To achieve the proper balance between this world and the next is one of the first obligations of discipleship, for one cannot be widely useful who holds himself aloof from this world, nor greatly influential who is cynical toward the next.

A second principle Jesus here enunciates—namely, protection: identified with this world, but not ensnared in its evils. One of the few things I recall from my visit to the Panama-Pacific Exposition was the Children's Wonderland. My children would not let me forget it. In one place they had a huge rope net stretched across a large open space. A tiny gnome presided and charmingly invited children to step on the net, take his hand, and walk across. Now the net swayed up and down like the waves of the sea, and it was no easy matter to manipulate one's feet so as to walk safely and steadily to the other side. Besides, underneath the net was an awesome sight, running water and jagged rocks. One could not possibly fall through the net, it was so closely woven and so securely fastened. But there one stood, swaying with the net, his feet fairly touching the running water and sharp rocks beneath, yet wholly safe, as clear of it

terrible clutches as though he were a thousand miles removed. This faintly illustrates what I mean when I say that one may be identified with the world but not ensnared in its evils.

Independence is another principle Jesus clearly enunciates in this gracious prayer. That is, living in the world but not dependent upon it, drawing our strength from hidden, unfailing sources. I admire the man who has an auto but is not dependent upon it. If the auto is laid up, he can take the street car; if the street car is out of commission, he can walk to his work. I admire the man who has books, who loves books, who loves to read books, papers, magazines, but who is not lost if he cannot lay his hands on a suitable book; who does not pace up and down like a restless lion in his cage if his favorite magazine does not appear on date, or if his pet paper is not delivered on the dot. I admire the man who loves the company of other men and women, who is bright, conversational, responsive, but who is not alone when he is alone. Such is the man who lives in this world, in the midst of its sordidness and richness, yet is not dependent upon it; he drinks of the fountain of eternal life, he partakes of the hidden bread. Years ago Matthew Arnold wrote a poem called "East London." He pictures East London in mid-August, the squalid streets of Bethnal Green, the pale weaver through his windows seen in Spitalfields. He meets a preacher down there who is devoting his

life to that poor and painful parish. The preacher looks ill and overworked. "How fares it with you?" he asks him. And the preacher replies, "Bravely, bravely, for I of late have been much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the living bread." Ah, there is the secret, and Matthew Arnold recognized it—living in the world, but not dependent upon it; drawing one's strength from deep and hidden and unfailing sources.

A fourth principle Jesus states, Insulation. Here are these electric lights. The light is brought to us by insulated wires. The epoch-making discovery of electric light and power would be useless were it not for the codiscovery of insulated wires. By insulated wires electricity is safely carried everywhere. From one of the seven wonders of the world—Niagara—wires radiate in every direction carrying light and power to countless thousands, lighting homes and turning wheels of industry. I look up at those wires and say, "In the world, but not of the world." It is the Master's consuming desire that his disciples shall be thus insulated—running here and there and yonder, wherever there is need or opportunity, powerful to do one's work, powerful because insulated; insulated not from the world, but in the world.

XIII

THE POWER OF A GOOD HABIT

THE POWER OF A GOOD HABIT

> **Daniel went into his house; he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed.**
>
> ***Daniel 6: 10***

EARLY training counts. Babylon received Daniel when a youth, but Jerusalem had had its chance with him as a boy. The mark of Jerusalem was indelibly stamped upon his soul. When you listen to the testimonies of people, nine times out of ten, somewhere or other in their remarks, you will hear them say, "When I was a boy," or "When I was a girl." When, on occasions, people in conversation draw back the curtains of their life, they say something like this, "In our home, when we were children, we did so and so." In religious experience this is particularly so. The faith of manhood and womanhood is rooted in the soil of boyhood and girlhood. In essentials your faith to-day is very largely what it was when you were twelve, fourteen, and fifteen years of age. There is sound philosophy in the admonition of this old Book, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it." Though the decree was signed, Daniel went up to his room and kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, as he did aforetime.

That is conformity to habit. It was his habit to do that thing. A few weeks ago I took my three children to see the Kinzua Bridge, not far from Bradford, Pa., on the Erie Railroad. Nearly twenty-five years have passed since I first saw the bridge. It was a widely-known bridge in its day, one of the great sights of that section of the country. It is still a great bridge, though not sought by the crowds as formerly. It is an immense network of steel, nearly half a mile long, and 301 feet high at the central span. My children and I dropped off the local train at an insignificant flag station and walked three miles across a hot, barren section to the bridge. At the end of the bridge we picked up some stones and carried them with us to the center. Now, directly beneath the center of the bridge flows the Kinzua Creek, from which the bridge gets its name. The creek winds down through the valley, until many miles below it joins the Allegheny River. The real thrill of crossing the bridge comes when we reach the center, and we take the stones we have lugged a quarter of a mile, lean over the rail and drop them, and watch them until they splash in the waters of the creek far below. Now, I suppose the stones my children dropped a few weeks ago splashed into the water at practically the same spot as the stones I dropped twenty-five years ago. Life is just like that. Daily and unconsciously we revisit the scenes of other years, and we stand on the

bridge and drop stones into the creek, and they fall into the same place—that is habit. So Daniel went up to his chamber and knelt in prayer, as he had done aforetime.

Lord, we thank thee for a goodly heritage. We are grateful for godly parents, for the helpful influences of the Sunday school, for the holy atmosphere of thy Church, for all the words and admonitions and examples which made up our early training and fixed our early habits. We have traveled far since then, but we have never outdistanced those first thoughts and ideals. Blessed be thy name who buildest character through godly parents and early, upright habits. So keep us in thy path until we are led into the sunlight of eternal day. Amen.

XIV

ARE YOUR WINDOWS OPEN?

ARE YOUR WINDOWS OPEN?

His windows being open
toward Jerusalem.
Daniel 6: 10

I HAVE read of a man who said, "If I were building a house and it could possibly be arranged, I should want it constructed with six sides, with windows on each side. And I should want this house so located that from one side I could look out upon lofty mountains whose chaste white summits kiss the sky. From the second side I should like to look out upon the restless sea and listen to its deep, mellow voice, so full of mystery and awe. From another side I should want to feast my eyes on a lovely garden, filled with flowers and sloping down to a broad, slow-moving stream. Passing to a fourth window I should like to peer into the silent, green-carpeted aisles of a forest primeval. From yet another I should want a vista of waving fields of grain and verdant hills. And from the sixth window I should like to see the hurrying throngs of people and hear the rumble of traffic. Those six windows would fit my every mood." I think that man is too extravagant. A house with four sides is good enough for me. But I want windows on every side. Not small windows such as our fathers made, but large windows, wide and deep and tall. And I want the shades lifted, not

drawn through most of the year, like the old-fashioned parlor. For the house of which I speak has no parlor; it has a living room. Out through the first window we look toward God. This must be the first window, for all life depends upon this fact, the fact of God. Keep your window open toward God. Let the light of a great assurance stream in through your window, so that you can say, as John Wesley said when he gathered up the varied and rich experiences of his long life in this one sentence, "The best of all is, God is with us." Our second window opens toward God's world. John climaxed them all as he looked and saw a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal; and on either side of the river the tree of life. The window on the third side of our house opens toward God's people. For, after all, God's sublimest creation is not fields, but folks. Folks are the object of his surpassing love. I cannot have confidence in any man's word or outlook who says he loves God, but who does not love folks. But our house has a fourth side, and a fourth wide-open window, and the name of that window is God's way. God has a way for you. What is that way? It is the way of righteousness, of holiness, of peace, of joy, of work well done, of temptation overcome, of labor requited, rest earned, and sorrow sanctified; in a word, it is the transformed way.

"The poem hangs on the berry bush,
When comes the poet's eye;

The street begins to masquerade,
When Shakespeare passes by."

And when you look out of your window upon your way and find that it is God's way, it is a transformed way. Then your way will be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Lord, I thank thee for windows. I praise thee for eyes with which I am able to look out through the open windows. Help me to

"Keep the windows open in my soul,
That the glory of the universe
May beautify it."

XV

THE GREATEST COMMAND AND THE BEST PROMISE

THE GREATEST COMMAND AND THE BEST PROMISE

> Go, . . . and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.
>
> *Matthew 28: 19, 20*

HERE are four twin thoughts. I call them twins because they are children of the same parents; they were born at one time. The first of these twin thoughts goes by the name of a command and a promise. "Go, and I will go with you." I found in the Philippines and throughout the entire Orient that among the best American citizens abroad, best in ability and best in character, were the men of the Standard Oil Company. Why? Because the Standard Oil Company demands of its foreign representatives men of proved worth, men of ideals and ability. Finding such men, it says to them: "You go out to China, or Japan, or Java, or the Philippines, and we will go with you; we will support you; we will give you an adequate salary and a good home." Is the Standard Oil greater than God? Never. When Jesus says, "Go," he adds, "I will go with you, I will sustain you." The prophet-poet of Israel put into true and lovely form the twin statement of command and promise when he lifted up his voice and sang:

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

The second of the twin thoughts born out of these great final words spoken by Jesus is the thought of duty and reward. Go and do your work, and the reward is that I will be with you.

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man—
> When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'
> The Youth replies, 'I can.'"

When the Youth has answered "Yes" to Duty, what is the reward? What, after all, are the chief compensations of life? Not the salary nor the wage one receives. Assuredly, the laborer is worthy of his hire. A man should be well and fairly paid for his work. But what one is paid is not the chief compensation. Joy in service, pride in one's work, satisfaction in duty well done—these are among the true rewards of life. But the great compensation of life is friendship. He who does his duty has friends. He who does his duty has the Friend, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. For even blood is not a guaranty that a man will go to the end of the world for his brother—but Jesus will. He says that he will, and Jesus never goes back on his word.

The third twin truth from out of these great words is the truth of task and strength. When

God gives a man a specific work to do, he also gives him strength to do that work. Go and do your work, and, lo, I will go with you to give you strength. Now, Moses was a great man, the greatest man of the Old Testament period. But Moses had his weaknesses. His first weakness was his failure to see that God accompanies every task with adequate strength to perform it. "I am not eloquent," said Moses, "I cannot speak convincingly; take Aaron, he is a great orator." Then God said, "Go, and I will be thy mouth." O faltering one, put thy shoulder within the yoke of thy task; remember, it is a yoke; the one side is thy God-given task, the other the promised strength of Jesus.

The fourth of the twin thoughts is this—a journey and a companion. Go, and I will be your companion. There is a great picture, "The Presence." It is the picture of a noble cathedral, high-vaulted ceiling, splendid lifted arches, glorious windows effulgent with light, and empty. Empty but for one person—a lone woman kneels at a bench in the rear of the cathedral, and near her, bending over her, is the mystic presence of Christ. It is a great picture, but if I were an artist fashioning a picture of "The Presence," I would have something else. I would have the cathedral; yes, and I would have the home, and the shop, and the school, and the street, and the office, and the store, and the factory—and everywhere, wherever men

journey or work, I would show the mystic presence of Christ,

"For I think the King of that country comes out from his tireless host,
And walks in this world of the weary as if he loved it the most;
And here in the dusty confusion, with eyes that are heavy and dim,
He meets again the eager men who are looking and longing for him,"

and the long, long, winding trail of your life has a blessed Companion, for he is with you even unto the end of the world.

XVI
CONSIDER THE LILIES

CONSIDER THE LILIES

Consider the lilies.
Matthew 6: 28

WE have considered nearly everything else, why not consider the lilies? We have considered taxes, city-planning, politics, amusements, the theater, movies, bootleggers, lawbreakers, crime, criminals, drinking, automobiles, and automobile recklessness, the weather, golf, baseball, the styles—let us now consider the lilies! Why?

Because Jesus said so. That is reason enough. I find that the Master did not say anything he did not mean. He did not talk superfluously. Take, for example, this very Sermon on the Mount in which this verse is found. What a model of speech it is! Why, even the reporter caught the spirit of the occasion, the object of the sermon. He did not begin his report by saying: "Yesterday the Church of Wide Acclaim on Announcement Avenue was crowded to the doors. Hundreds were turned away. The church was decorated . . . [paragraph, paragraph]. The music consisted of . . . [more paragraphs]. The Rev. Dr. So-and-So, a man of dramatic platform ability, etc." Now listen to the reporter's account of the Sermon on the Mount: "Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and his disciples came unto him: and he opened

14 534

his mouth and taught them, saying—" Not a superfluous word. And when Jesus said, "Consider the lilies," it was not a play to the galleries, it was not a pretty little use of pretty words. Because Jesus meant every word that he spoke, I will do as he asks. Consider the lilies. Why?

Because lilies are clean, white, pure, and wholesome. So much that is not clean and wholesome is brought to our attention. The newspapers daily bring to our doors long and vivid accounts of the unwholesome. Now, let me tell you my attitude with respect to the press. I would not want the paper that comes to my door entirely deleted of all crime and scandal reports. Crime and scandal are constantly taking place in society as at present organized. That constitutes news, and we should be informed. But I do object to the great headlines, the harrowing details, the sentimental gush. I do object to a certain news service which advertises itself as specializing in "sex, blood, and gold" news, playing up the abnormalities of life. My attitude is the same with respect to the movies. I want to see life depicted there, but I want life that is normal, clean, and wholesome. Consider the lilies. Why?

Because the lilies are spiritual—spiritual as opposed to the material. We are concerned very largely with the material. Of necessity it is so. We must make a living, and that is done by contact with the sordid, material elements of our

daily grind. The lily typifies the spiritual in life. You cannot eat flowers. At the same time, food tastes a little better if there are flowers on the dining table. The simple fact that there is something on the table that can not be eaten, in the midst of all that is to be eaten, emphasizes the fact that life is more than meat and the body than raiment. Do you know, that is what the Church says to me! It calls me to a halt in this busy life—for I am making a living the same as every one else—and says to me, "Consider the lilies." I never pass a church, a great, towering church in the crowded city, or a lovely, reticent church in the quiet country, that I do not hear its very walls, doors, and spire say to me, "Consider the lilies." Why?

Because the lilies tell of God's love and care. This is the point of the sentence. We must not tear it out of its setting. Apparently there was a tendency, then as now, both among the disciples and the mass of the people, to worry. Jesus said to such: "Do not be anxious. Look at the fowls of the air; they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Likewise he will clothe you. Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet even Solomon could not array himself as gloriously as they." There are two charges against worry. First, it is futile. Worry does not accomplish a thing. Did you ever know of worry tackling a job and complet-

ing it? Second, worry is not fair to God. His word is true; take him at his word.

Consider the lilies. They ministered to Jesus; let them minister to you.

Consider the lilies. They bear God's message of assurance to wounded hearts and troubled minds.

Consider the lilies. You can crush the flower in your hand, but you cannot crush its message; or if you do crush it, the message but becomes the more fragrant.

Consider the lilies. There is something to life besides banks, stocks, and bonds.

Consider the lilies. "They will preach to you, if you will but hear."

XVII
EVEN OUR FAITH

EVEN OUR FAITH

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.
1 John 5: 4

I AM going to emphasize four words. Probably you will anticipate me as I name these words. But that does not matter. It only shows that our minds are traveling in the same channel, or that your thought is quicker than my speech. The first is the word "victory." What do you think of when you hear the word "victory"? You think of a war, and in that war a great battle, won by the side with which you sympathized; you call that a victory. Or it may be that you are thinking of another sort of contest. If you are the partisan of any one team—as you doubtless are—in your great national game of baseball, you follow with keenest interest the daily scores. As the season draws to a close, your team climbs toward the top, reaches the top—that is victory. There is yet another thought that may arise in your mind as you hear the word "victory"; you may think of a victory in debate. Some of the mightiest victories in English or American history are the victories of debate, the victories of the Websters and Gladstones of our lands. But none of these victories is the victory of the text. None of them is *the* victory. I am not

stooping to a petty treatment of the text when I point out this word "the." The victory is the conquest that a man achieves within his own soul.

The second word of emphasis is the word "overcome." This is the victory that overcometh. What is the difference between the words "victory" and "overcome"? Are they not the same? No, they are not. The word "victory" may be applied to a pugilistic contest. You may properly call the one who batters his opponent in the ring so that he cannot get up for the count a victor. But you cannot call him an overcomer. Overcome belongs to a higher realm; it belongs to the moral and spiritual realm. I call Helen Keller an overcomer. Deaf, dumb, blind since infancy, she has mastered these handicaps until to-day she hears and sees more of the wonders and beauties of the world than vast numbers who have all their faculties. Anyone, physically handicapped, who accepts the handicap, climbs and achieves, is more than a victor; victor is too tame a word, he is an overcomer. Likewise, he who faces the handicaps of his soul and conquers is an overcomer. We often speak of a man being overcome by circumstances. It is a tragic thing when one succumbs to the circumstances in which he finds himself. Don't do that! I do not care what your circumstances are, you can overcome them. Listen! I hear a voice sounding down the years, a voice meant

for this very hour, the voice of Jesus, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

That overcometh the world. What was the world of John's day? It was a world quite different from ours. Government was against them. History records a definite, cruel and long-continued persecution of the Christians, that they might be subdued and their faith blotted out. Society too was against them. The Christians had no standing in society. Devoid of property rights, they were the scum and offscouring of the earth. How different the world to-day! Government is with us. It is a pretty poor sort of government that does not recognize religion. Society is with us. Society craves for the three chief interests of life—birth, marriage, death—the sanctions of our holy religion. How then shall we characterize the world of our day? Two words will suffice, "approving indifference." The great world approves of the sanctions of faith, and the great world is all but totally indifferent to the searching claims of Christ upon the soul of society and of the individual. And any young man, earnestly anxious to serve his day and generation, to make the most of life, must overcome first and constantly this approving indifference, this damning acquiescence of the world.

Even our faith. It is a faith that is personal, our faith, your faith and mine; a faith that solves my problems, that meets your situation. It is

a present faith. It is not a relic of past centuries to be placed on exhibition in the British Museum; it is a dynamo to be put into use to perform your daily work. It is a faith that is practical. We can take it into the shop and office, store and mill, home and school, every day. It is a powerful faith. The mightiest force that God ever loosed on earth is not the fulcrum, nor steam, nor electricity, nor harnessed Niagaras, nor dynamite, nor wireless; the mightiest force God ever loosed on earth was when he made faith available in the hearts of men. It was not a play to the galleries, nor was it spoken to fire the imagination when Jesus said: "Faith can move that mountain. Faith overcomes the world." Not something that faith gives, but faith itself. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you are an overcomer.

XVIII
ARE YOU AFRAID?

ARE YOU AFRAID?

God hath not given us
the spirit of fear; but
of power, and of love,
and of a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1: 7

IF I could leave my family, my children, one of two things—insurance or assurance—I would not hesitate in my choice. Would you? I would leave them assurance. Yes, I am insured. I carry some insurance. Not a large amount, but sufficient to "keep the wolf from the door" should I be suddenly called home. I believe in insurance—particularly for young men and young women. It encourages the good habit of thrift and saving. Fifty million people in the United States are investors in insurance in one form or another. That is a good sign. No wonder that Uncle Sam is the world's banker. Much as I believe in insurance, I believe more in assurance. There is a difference. Insurance is money paid over at one's death. Assurance is a spiritual quality that does not have to wait until death ere it is bequeathed or claimed. If, somehow or other, I could impart to my children the quality of faith, of confidence, of inner soul power, the quality I choose to call assurance, I would not worry about insurance. I would not consider it an unpardonable sin if I failed to meet

my next insurance premium. Now, this very thing is possible. Paul wrote to Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." These words are from the apostle's "last will and testament." He is disposing of his property. "I bequeath to my beloved son Timothy." What does he bequeath? Not any tangible property, as far as I can see. Not an insurance policy made out in Timothy's name. The Equitable and Prudential and the long list of Mutuals were not doing business then. What does he leave him? Not insurance, but assurance—the power to be unafraid.

Why Fear?

God has not given us the spirit of fear. I suppose no one thing causes more failures than fear. I am not thinking now of business or professional failures—though I have no doubt fear plays a large part in many such failures—rather I am thinking of failures in character, in individual Christian achievement and personal testimony. As individual Christians, we are not nearly as successful as we should be. It is because of fear. We fear our own ability. We fear opposition. We fear what others may say. We fear we may say or do something that will not pass, that will be disdainfully received, in the circles in which we move. Now, Paul is arguing against that, pleading against it, with

his young successor Timothy. He is saying to him: "Timothy, you have a gift; it is the gift of God, a gift of ability, a gift of pleasing personality and winsome speech; I remind you now of that gift. Use it. Stir it up. Do not yield to fear in the use of that gift. Do not be timid or cowardly." Put yourself in Timothy's place, will you? The words the great apostle wrote to Timothy are meant for you. You have a gift—a gift of ability, a gift from God. Do not be afraid to use it. Do not be ashamed to use it. Do not fear what others may think or say. You represent great power in the homes and stores and offices and shops and clubs of your community. In those circles do not be timid or cowardly about your testimony for your Lord. This is exactly what is meant when we read in the Book, "God hath not given you the spirit of fear." No; but God has given you something else, something infinite in its glorious contribution to your usefulness and life.

The Spirit of Power

O the exhilaration—like the invigorating plunge into the cool, clear water—is the consciousness of power! "The Growth of the Soil," translated from the Norwegian, is a simple but surpassingly beautiful tale of a man's power over the forces of nature. Starting with nothing but his bare hands and the virgin forest, he clears the land, tills the fields, builds a home, a man of

power. God has given us power like that—power that harnesses the forces of earth and air, creating therefrom the comforts and conveniences of civilization. But there is a power greater than that—the power of character, of spiritual appreciation and achievement, of self-control and personal testimony—the power of Christ in the human heart. There are foregleams of that power in the Old Testament. Joseph, thrust into the unenviable rôle of "favorite son"; the hated object of jealous brothers; sold into slavery; carried into a foreign land; dwelling among a strange people; put behind prison bars; falsely accused of a gross moral wrong; earning his freedom by industrious attention to duty and sheer intellectual superiority; emerging from his trials with clean skirts, a conscience void of offense toward man and God; climbing step by step to the highest place in the realm—Joseph is the plain and fascinating account of a man's power of character, of self-control, and a personal testimony. While the Old Testament has only foregleams of that power, the New Testament is flooded with it. Christ came to bestow that power. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God." The word still stands. The promise is true. It may be quickly proved by anyone who will throw off his fear and step out with courage. "As many as received him, to them gave he power."

The Spirit of Love

"God is love." So said a man who knew. It was the aged John. "My little children," he said, "God is love; and whoso loveth dwelleth in God, and God in him." Let me call your attention to a poem. It is a very old and well-known poem. You may not think of it as a poem; but it is a poem just the same. This poem has two titles. Sometimes it is called "The Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians," and sometimes the title is given as "Love." It is a poem in prose form. Whenever I think of this poem I visualize it without chapter heading or verse separations. I think of it as occupying the center of a clean, white page. There is where it belongs. Now, think through that poem just a moment. Stop right here and recall what is claimed for love. You have done that? Well, then you are ready for the closing sentence, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Honestly, what do you think of this poem? Mr. Controversialist, stirring up strife and hatred among your brethren, what do you think of this poem? Mr. Critic, with your bitter criticism and faultfinding, how about this poem? Mr. Statesman, with your pagan talk about the "defenses of the nation," what is your judgment of this poem? Mr. Reader, whoever you are, whatever your difficulty, have you tried love?

Dare you try it? Have you the courage? It is the world's greatest remedy. It is Christ's way —the last word. And God has given it to us— the spirit of love.

The Spirit of a Sound Mind

There is a climax here, an ascending and logical climax. God has given us the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Victory in the body and in the heart and in the head. The first century was particularly fortunate in having as the chief interpreter of the gospel of Jesus a man who had a head. Paul, as we say to-day, "had brains." When, on the Damascus highway, he was struck to the earth, the light that dazzled his eyes illumined his mind. A sound mind! How I covet a sound mind! A mind that is balanced. A mind that weighs matters well. A mind that is steady. A mind that does not stay near the shore, that often ventures out into the deep, but always carries a compass. A mind that finds its way through the mists and fogs of the world's thinking—as I found my way with my auto, a few days since, through forty miles of an early-morning, dense, well-nigh impenetrable river fog in Pennsylvania —and comes finally to the mountain top, clear, crisp, sunny. Give me a sound mind. Jesus had it, and Jesus bestows it. For when a man is saved from his sins, he is saved to a sound mind.

DATE DUE

248
W94

BR 125 .W825 1927

Wright, Bruce S.

The life in the spirit

United Theological Seminary Library
MAIN BR125.W825 1927
Wright, Bruce The life in the spirit /
3 0645 0003 6601 9